

AGN. NO. _____

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH

NOVEMBER 24, 2009

ANGELES NATIONAL FOREST

In a November 17, 2009 report issued by the Los Angeles County Fire Department on the Station Fire in the Angeles National Forest (ANF), specific recommendations were made that would increase fire fighting capabilities in the future.

Currently, the ANF is the responsibility of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, United States Forest Service, and problems and solutions identified by our County fire department should be shared with all applicable Federal officials:

Brush Clearance

- Problem:
 - a) Within ANF brush clearance, the distance of cleared land from the structure to natural vegetation is limited to 30 feet. By contrast, clearance should be 200 feet from the structure to natural vegetation, as required on certain properties outside of the ANF.
- Solution:
 - a) Direct ANF to enact and enforce brush clearance distance of 200 feet from all structures within and adjacent to the forest where such clearance encroaches on the forest.
- Problem:
 - a) Various ridge top communication sites (towers and structures) are extremely vulnerable to a wildland fire because of 30-foot clearance and steep terrain. This vulnerability includes Mt. Wilson, Mt. Disappointment, Mt. Lukens and others.

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- Solutions:
 - a) Expand clearance to at least 200 feet as recommended above.
 - b) Engage fire protection engineers to develop and apply a fire-resistive ground cover material, creating a buffer zone surrounding such installations to protect them from flames, heat, and flying embers.
 - c) Provide incentives for communication/observatory/museum owners to "harden" existing structures to make them fire-resistive (per Los Angeles County Fire Department codes and regulations applicable to the Santa Monica Mountain area).

Fire Suppression Methodologies

- Problem:
 - a) U.S. Forest Service fire suppression policies limit timing and scope in the use of State and local government personnel, equipment and aircraft for early attack and suppression of fires within the ANF. These policies have created a fire suppression paradigm that must be changed, especially in forests near major population areas such as the ANF.
- Solutions:
 - a) Allow ANF to enter into operating agreements that provide for seamless, as needed, utilization of all Federal, State and local fire suppression personnel, equipment and aircraft for any and all fires occurring within the ANF (not just Initial Action Zone). This would include night flying, use of Super Scoopers and all other equipment and techniques most readily available to affect rapid knockdown and control of all fires.
 - b) Modify all existing Wilderness Area legislation to assure that any and all fire suppression equipment and techniques can be applied at the discretion of fire incident commander without a telephone call seeking permission first.
 - c) Direct the creation of an equitable cost apportionment formula between U.S. Forest Service, State and local government to assure best available fire suppression resources are utilized to effect rapid knockdown and control of fires occurring within the ANF.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors adopt these Los Angeles County Fire Department recommendations and transmit a letter to Congress and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, outlining these problems and proposed solutions, in order to bring about these needed policy changes to better preserve life and property in future fires.

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